

The Church's Duty.

BY WILLIAM CRIPE.

We are living in an enquiring age, when people are not content with being told that thus, and so, is so, but go deeper than the surface, and wish to know why it is so. The Church should be the first to help in the search after truth, and should call her people that they might reason and explore together, thus finding strength in union.

It is but natural that when inquiring minds are repulsed and discouraged by the church who nursed them,—given a stone when they asked for bread,—that they should turn to more liberal theologians, and gradually drift away from the arms that once held them.

The more intelligent part of Christendom is asking for a simple religion, one founded upon reason and common sense. Creeds and forms belong to the past. At one time they had power to hold the people; now their chains are dropping, link by link. Let the Church be just and merciful to her people, and they will not drift away from her, but find a secure and eternal mooring place within her harbor, for the "Quality of mercy is not strained, it drippeth as the gentle dew from Heaven, upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed; it blesseth him that giveth, and him that receiveth. 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest;" and "Justice is the jewel of the world."

The church has need to be up and doing, seeking to know the kind of food required by her growing children. The people of this great and free country should be held and guided by a religion that can be understood—that will make them more God-like in this life. Theology must step down and meet the people and try to lead them into "green pastures" of truth, and "besides still waters" of love and good will that shall rule the mind and judgment until that brighter day when all shall see "heart to heart" and there shall be no "drifting away" from the arms of our loving Master.

While it is well to do all that we can to fit people for the "land beyond the river," it is also well to remember the widow, fatherless one or orphan in our midst, who might be made happier by being given what will sustain life, and by giving them spiritual as well as bodily food, we may enable them and us to

"Reach that happy place
Where sorrow cometh never;
To rest within His loving arms
Forever and forever."

Edna Mills, Ind.

A Drunkard's Last Will.

I die a wretched sinner, and I leave to the world a worthless reputation, a wicked example, and a memory only fit to perish. I leave to my parents sorrow and bitterness of soul all the days of their lives. I leave to my brothers and sisters shame and grief, and the reproach of their acquaintances. I leave my wife widowed and heart-broken, and a life of lonely struggling with want and suffering. I leave my children a tainted name, and a ruined position, a pitiful ignorance, and the mortifying recollection of a father, who, by his life, disgraced humanity, and at his premature death joined the great company of those who are never to enter the kingdom of God.—SELECTED.

A Man in the Ditch.

About eighteen years ago, three ministers were walking on a country road a little north of Aberdeen. It was late at night, and they had been attending a meeting in the country. As they went along, they noticed a countryman in a state of intoxication scrambling on all fours out of a ditch.

One of the ministers said "I must go and speak to that man."

The two others tried to dissuade him, telling him it was of no use, and that he would get nothing but abuse.

But the minister said "The Spirit of God bids me, and I must speak to him."

By this time the man had got out of the ditch. The minister began to speak to him, whereupon the fellow took off his coat and wanted to fight him.

The minister said, "I can fight, but not with

your weapons;" and getting down on his knees, he began to pray very earnestly for the man. As he pleaded, God touched the man's heart, and he got down on his knees beside the minister. By the time the minister had finished his prayer, the drunkard was ready to be spoken with; and he was pointed to a sin-forgiving Saviour.

They stopped at the first cottage on the road, and asked the people if they could lodge the man for the night.

After looking at him the cottager said, "Why we have just been holding a prayer-meeting for that very man, he is my brother. We have had a special prayer-meeting to-night, to ask God for his salvation."

Five years afterwards the minister was gladdened by knowing that the man was still standing a living witness to the power of God, and was being used as a great blessing to others.—SEL.

Ice Water Christians.

Riding on a railway train one warm day, we saw upon a tank at the end of the carriage, the words "ice-water," and approaching and pressing upon the faucet, drew some of the refreshing liquid, and tasted it. Ice-water! It might as well have been called dish-water. The ice was gone, and the stale and tepid beverage inspired only disappointment and disgust. The outside of the tank said "Ice-water" but no pains had been taken to keep the contents of it in accordance with the label.

There is a good deal of the religion of the day in a similar condition. Either the label or the contents should be changed. Outside there may be religion, inside worldliness; outside, piety, inside formality; outside, orthodoxy, inside all sorts of departures from faith; outside, truth, inside error and deception; outside, holiness, inside crookedness; outside, high professions, inside low practices; outside whitewash, inside dead men's bones, and all manner of corruption; outside, and in profession, the church is either hot or cold, but inside the Lord declares, "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth." A good profession is a good thing, provided the practice be in accordance with it. But lying professions which cover iniquities, not only disappoint men, but dishonor God and disgrace his cause. Either bring the inward life up to the standard, or else abandon an empty profession. Do not have ice-water on the outside, and dishwater within.—THE SAFEGUARD.

The Deacon's Prayer.

About forty years ago Deacon Pearson lived in Portsmouth, N. H. He was a man of sterling principle, rare judgment and good business ability.

Through the failure of a friend he became involved, and to save his name untarnished, sacrificed all of his business, and even most of his household goods. With a stout heart he squared his broad shoulders, shut his firm lips, and started fresh without a word of complaint. His wife, as slight and fragile as her husband was strong and hearty, was slowly sinking with the "old-fashioned consumption."

One morning the Deacon brought in from the woodshed the last armful of wood, and as he did so his daughter told him that they were entirely out of candles.

Before going to his office he knelt by the bedside of his wife and prayed that wood and candles might be sent them that day, and then started out to work "with his might," and rebuild his business.

At eleven o'clock that forenoon a team entered the yard, and a load of wood was put in the woodshed. A box of candles came with the load of wood.

Neither the Deacon nor his family had mentioned their wants to a living soul. It was some time before they discovered who it was that sent the much-needed supplies. At last a prominent Universalist, who was a bitter enemy of the Deacon because of the wonderfully caustic arguments that the latter could bring against his opinions, confessed that he sent the load. Said he:

"Nearly all that forenoon a voice kept saying to me, 'Send Deacon Pearson wood and candles; send Deacon Pearson wood and candles,' I fought it as long as I could, and at last, in sheer desperation, gave in and sent them, and then the voice ceased."

The story has been treasured for years in the family of Deacon Pearson, as an evidence that God hears and answers prayer.—SE.

Items.

BY E. MASON.

In these scientific days we hear too much of the evolution of the lower into the higher, and too little of the retrogression of the higher to the lower. It needs constant care and constant watchfulness on the part of the gardener to bring a flower from its native wild state to a state of cultivation; but after a course of training which covers years and extends through many generations of plants, the cultivated flower may sink back to its wild state, through a single season's neglect. It is a hard struggle for a man to reform himself from his natural inclinations; but he needs only to fold his hands and give himself up to the promptings of his nature, to work for himself a moral degradation infinitely greater than the retrogression of the garden flower to the wayside weed. We are in no danger of being evolved into something higher, in spite of ourselves; all the danger is that through sloth or spiritual carelessness we shall sink back without realizing it, to the condition of those without God and without hope in the world.

Whatever tolerance may be shown by the public toward tobacco-using ministers, one thing is certain, but very few of even those that are guilty of the habit themselves heartily approve of it in their ministers. Some professing Christians will point with undisguised satisfaction to ministers guilty of this indulgence, as an excuse for their own weakness. The fact that cleanliness and godliness are twin sisters is gaining popular approval. This was demonstrated at the Philadelphia Methodist conference, of last year, by the hearty applause of the audience and delegates, when the candidates for the ministry responded with "I will," to Bishop Warren's question, "Will you abstain from the use of tobacco in every form?" The example set us here is well worth following.

A self-forgetful regard for the welfare of others which prompts a Christian to deny himself a harmless indulgence, or to restrain himself in an allowable liberty, in order to be of service to those who might be grieved or injured by his example, is worthy of all praise. And there are opportunities for every Christian to exercise this commendable virtue, in various spheres of personal influence.

If a preacher wishes to strike at the besetting sin of his hearers, the surest way to success is to begin by preaching against his own besetting sin. We are all made on the same general plan, and the preacher will find that he cannot vigorously denounce his own sins without vigorously denouncing the sins of others.

Elder Isaac Price.

ISAAC PRICE, a prominent minister in the Dunkard Church, residing in Schuylkill township, Chester Co., Pa., died recently at the advanced age of 83 years. He was a very able and eloquent speaker, and served in the ministry many years. During the winter of 1854-5, we were teaching school in Montgomery Co., Pa., and boarded near the Green Tree Meeting-house, where ISAAC often spoke. On a certain Sunday morning when it was his turn to preach, he took a testament and read the chapter designed for that day (it was the custom in that church to read a chapter of the New Testament each Sunday consecutively, beginning with the first of Matthew and so continue to the end of the book), but could find nothing in it from which to preach. He then turned over to the book of Revelations and read another chapter. Finding an opening there, he preached a very able and eloquent sermon, and when he was through with the subject, and the audience felt that he was about to close, his mind caught up the subject of temperance, and he spoke one of the most earnest and impressive temperance discourses we ever listened to.

We called upon him several years ago at his home, and, though bowed under the burden of declining years, he was still active and vigorous. However, the day of usefulness for all of us will pass away, and the time of gathering home come upon us. So also with our friend. The voice eloquent with Gospel truth is hushed, and the weary laborer has gone to his long home.—HERALD OF TRUTH.